

INTRODUCTION

LOCATION

Sandy Springs incorporated as a city on December 1, 2005. It is located in North Fulton County, north of the City of Atlanta and south of the City of Roswell. Its western boundary is the Chattahoochee River (Cobb County lies on the other side of the river), and to the City's east are DeKalb County and a small portion of Gwinnett County.

OVERVIEW OF PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The first phase of the comprehensive planning process in Sandy Springs consisted of preparation of three reports: (1) a Community Assessment, (2) a Technical Appendix to the Community Assessment,¹ and (3) a Community Participation Program. The content of these 3 reports is determined by the state's Comprehensive Planning rule Chapter 110-12-01; however, the Community Assessment and Technical Appendix together describe existing conditions in Sandy Springs and provide an overview of the City as it currently exists, along with demographic, housing and other data. The Mayor and City Council approved by resolution the submission of these documents to the state to meet the first phase of the City's comprehensive planning requirements on January 16, 2007. The Community Assessment, Technical Appendix and Citizen Participation Program were delivered to the Atlanta Regional Commission on February 16, 2007.

The information contained in this document represents the second phase of the preparation of the City's Comprehensive Plan. This document is known as the Community Agenda. It represents the City's vision for its future over a 20-year period and contains the policies and capital projects intended to implement that vision.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY AGENDA

The citywide vision statement provides the organizing framework for preparation of the Community Agenda and is presented first, in Chapter 1. The citywide vision is then elaborated upon with the delineation and description of character areas. Further definition of the character area concepts is provided with an update to the City's Future Land Use Map, also presented in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 provides a list of 80 "issues and opportunities" that were articulated in the Community Assessment Report in Phase I of this process. The local planning requirements of the state require that the list of final issues and opportunities be included in the Community Agenda, and each of them be addressed in the Community Agenda in terms of policies and work programs, as appropriate.

Chapter 3 is a summary of the Community Assessment, and it provides important planning data (i.e., projections) that are considered essential to understanding the plan itself. Chapter 3 also provides the most critical information about the various functional planning topics.

Chapter 4 provides references to other plans of the state, regional agencies, Fulton County, and the City of Sandy Springs.

¹ Also referred to in the Local Planning Standards as "Supporting Analysis of Data and Information."

Chapter 5 provides a consolidated set of policies. This chapter, along with the Future Land Use Map presented in Chapter 1, will be the most frequently cited elements of the Community Agenda. Policies are organized by major function (natural resources, land use, etc.) with more detailed subcategories, as appropriate.

The discussion of implementation measures is consolidated in Chapter 6. Work program items are identified and described, again, by functional element. A consolidated listing of all work program items is provided in the Short-Term Work Program. Chapter 7 provides the Capital Improvements Element (CIE) in support of the City's impact fee program which covers public safety, recreation and parks, and roads.

Following the main body of the Community Agenda, there is a glossary to assist with understanding the planning terms used throughout this document. A list of references is also provided. Finally, it is important to note that opportunities for public input were included throughout the development of the Community Assessment in the first phase of the Comprehensive Plan process. Citizen Advisory Committee meetings, community outreach and various surveying techniques were used to gather citizen input, which will be used in the creation of the Community Agenda.

PURPOSES AND USES OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMUNITY AGENDA

The Community Agenda is intended to serve several purposes. First, it is a plan intended to assist the City with future decisions in a variety of policy areas. Second, the Community Agenda covers a long-range planning horizon of 20 years to the year 2027. Third, the Community Agenda is "comprehensive" in the sense that it covers the entire City limits, and it encompasses all the functions that make a community work, while considering the interrelatedness of those functions. The Community Agenda is based on the foundation that if the City knows where it wants to go, it possesses better prospects of getting there.

In addition to these purposes, the Community Agenda can provide a framework for evaluating future development proposals, whether they are requests for rezoning, applications for use permits, subdivision plat approvals, and other requests. The Community Agenda is also intended to provide guidance for operating and capital improvement budgets, while giving the community an understanding of the City's future vision, as well as the overall direction and intensity for new growth and redevelopment. The Community Agenda contains a wealth of data provided from an assessment of the City's existing conditions, which is important to the City's successful growth. Other local governments, regional entities, and state agencies also look at the contents of the Community Agenda as the best available statement of municipal policy and intent.

Finally, the Community Agenda's ultimate intent is to provide the citizens of Sandy Springs, its Mayor and City Council, Planning Commission and other interested stakeholders with guidance on the implementation of the City's vision with clear strategies to achieve its goals and objectives.

AMENDMENT AND UPDATE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMUNITY AGENDA

As required by state planning rules, the Community Agenda must be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains consistent with the vision and goals of the community. In doing so, the community can look to the Community Agenda as an expression of the City's current policies in

the areas of housing, economic development, land use, natural and cultural resources, intergovernmental coordination, transportation and other policy areas. In cases where it is determined that a particular policy, goal, program, or statement is no longer a valid expression of the City's vision and goals, the plan must be amended to reflect those changes that may occur over time. Otherwise, the plan becomes dated and ineffective at guiding important policy decisions. State rules require local governments to update their Community Agenda every five years, and at that time, the state encourages local governments to provide major updates to the entire Comprehensive Plan. However, should a local government elect to not comprehensively update its plan at the 5 year mark, the plan must be comprehensively revised every 10 years. Amendments may be considered by the Mayor and City Council, and the Planning Commission, whenever the City finds it necessary to do so. When there is a significant change in policy by the Mayor and City Council, such as the addition or deletion of a major capital improvement project that is described in the adopted plan, the plan should be amended.

QUALIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT STATUS

Finally, the draft Community Agenda was approved by the Mayor and City Council for submission to the state on June 19, 2007. The document was delivered to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) on July 6, 2007. Comments were received on the Community Agenda from ARC and DCA on September 13, 2007 and October 31, 2007. City staff met with the ARC to discuss their feedback and made those suggested revisions that were consistent with the City's vision on October 23, 2007. The final Community Agenda was adopted by the Mayor and City Council on November 20, 2007. The City received notice of the extension of its Qualified Local Government on December 20, 2007. Qualified Local Government status is in place for Sandy Springs until October 31, 2011.